

BIRD IDENTIFICATION GUIDE: HAWKS

COMMON NAME	FAMILY/SUBGROUP	SIMILAR TO	TELLTALE MARKINGS	OTHER CHARACTERISTICS
Sharp-shinned hawk	Accipitridae (Accipiter)	Cooper's hawk	Shorter, squared tail; may be slightly notched	Smallest accipiter; dark back w/ rusty barred breast; common
Cooper's hawk	Accipitridae (Accipiter)	Sharp-shinned hawk	Tail longer and well-rounded	Dark back w/ rusty barred breast; White tail stripe broader/more prominent
Northern goshawk	Accipitridae (Accipiter)		Broad white eye stripe	Largest accipiter; dark back w/ pale gray barred underparts; uncommon
Common blackhawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)		Single broad white band across middle of tail	Black hawk w/short, broad tail; in flight, white spot obvious near wing tip at the base of primaries
Zone-tailed hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)	Common blackhawk	Broad white tail bands	Black hawk w/slimmer wings
Gray hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)			Gray back w/gray barred underparts; white rump
Swainson's hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)		Dark bib; Buff colored wing linings w/contrasting dark flight feathers	Long,narrow,pointed wings
Red-tailed hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)		Rufous-colored tail (topside); dark bar on leading edge of underwing	
Harris hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)		White rump w/white tail band; chestnut color on shoulders, wing linings and thighs	Black/chocolate brown overall
Ferruginous hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)		Rusty "v" formed by thighs, tail whitish or pale rufous	Body rufous above, whitish below
Rough-legged hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)	Golden eagle, northern harrier (female)	Black patch on wrists of underwing (juveniles and lgt morph); white tail w/broad, dark band (all color morphs)	Dark body; long, narrow wings; dark,broad cummerbund across belly apparent in some birds
Bald eagle	Accipitridae (Accipitrinae)		White head and tail;large yellow bill Immature has dark head and bill	We know what it looks like 😊)
Golden eagle	Accipitridae (Accipitrinae)	Juvenile bald eagle (has blotchier tail &	Wash of gold color on the back of the neck; white tail	Dark colored bird

		underwing pattern; golden tail is distinctly banded)	w/broad, dark terminal band	
--	--	--	-----------------------------	--

Families and Subgroups

ACCIPITRIDAE

KITES, HAWKS and EAGLES:
 Diurnal birds of prey with hooked bills and strong talons. Males usually smaller than females.

Accipitrinae

Subfamily that includes eagles. These birds are bigger than buteos. Bills are almost as long as the head.

Accipters

Agile woodland hawks with long tails and short, rounded wings

Buteos

Hawks that soar high in the air. Usually have broad, banded tails and rounded wings. Females usually larger. Dark morphs common.

COMMON NAME	FAMILY/SUBGROUP	SIMILAR TO	TELLTALE MARKINGS	OTHER CHARACTERISTICS
Sharp-shinned hawk	Accipitridae (Accipiter)	Cooper's hawk	Shorter, squared tail; may be slightly notched	Smallest accipiter; dark back w/ rusty barred breast; common
Cooper's hawk	Accipitridae (Accipiter)	Sharp-shinned hawk	Tail longer and well-rounded	Dark back w/ rusty barred breast; White tail stripe broader/more prominent
Northern goshawk	Accipitridae (Accipiter)		Broad white eye stripe	Largest accipiter; dark back w/ pale gray barred underparts; uncommon
Common blackhawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)		Single broad white band across middle of tail	Black hawk w/short, broad tail; in flight, white spot obvious near wing tip at the base of primaries
Zone-tailed hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)	Common blackhawk	Broad white tail bands	Black hawk w/slimmer wings
Gray hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)			Gray back w/gray barred underparts; white rump
Swainson's hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)		Dark bib; Buff colored wing linings w/contrasting dark flight feathers	Long,narrow,pointed wings
Red-tailed hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)		Rufous-colored tail (topside); dark bar on leading edge of underwing	
Harris hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)		White rump w/white tail band; chestnut color on shoulders, wing linings and thighs	Black/chocolate brown overall
Ferruginous hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)		Rusty "v" formed by thighs, tail whitish or pale rufous	Body rufous above, whitish below
Rough-legged hawk	Accipitridae (Buteo)	Golden eagle, northern harrier (female)	Black patch on wrists of underwing (juveniles and lgt morph); white tail w/broad, dark band (all color morphs)	Dark body; long, narrow wings; dark,broad cummerbund across belly apparent in some birds
Bald eagle	Accipitridae (Accipitrinae)		White head and tail;large yellow bill Immature has dark head and bill	We know what it looks like ☺)
Golden eagle	Accipitridae (Accipitrinae)	Juvenile bald eagle (has blotchier tail & underwing pattern; golden tail is distinctly banded)	Wash of gold color on the back of the neck; white tail w/broad, dark terminal band	Dark colored bird

Families and Subgroups

ACCIPITRIDAE

KITES, HAWKS and EAGLES:

Diurnal birds of prey with hooked bills and strong talons. Males usually smaller than females.

Accipitrinae

Subfamily that includes eagles. These birds are bigger than buteos. Bills are almost as long as the head.

Accipters

Agile woodland hawks with long tails and short, rounded wings

Buteos

Hawks that soar high in the air. Usually have broad, banded tails and rounded wings. Females usually larger. Dark morphs common.